

State of Vermont
Department of Libraries

MOBILE LIBRARY LITERACY

Solutions for a Rural Environment



Presented by Sybil Brigham McShane
State Librarian

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MOBILE LIBRARY LITERACY

SOLUTIONS FOR A RURAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

Funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the State of Vermont Department of Libraries is beginning a two year "Mobile Library Literacy" project to discover if mobile library services is a viable means for serving rural and suburban populations in the 21st century. In announcing the grant, Vermont's U.S. Senator James Jeffords described the project as designed "to promote access to books, reading programs, and information through technology. [It] will extend the walls of the library. . . and welcome all Vermonters to be part of the learning community"

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Introduction

Mobile library outreach services such as bookmobiles have traditionally been a means to provide library and information services to rural citizens. Yet between 1974 and 1998 not a single bookmobile operated in Vermont, the nation's most rural state, and nationally only 8% of bookmobiles operate in communities with populations under 10,000.

The Department will provide grants to local libraries working with coalitions of school districts, schools, and other community organizations to provide mobile library services on a county, school district, or regional basis. The grants will be flexible, allowing each applicant to tailor its project to local needs and requirements but the emphasis will be

on partnerships, service to all age groups and sustainability beyond the 2-year grant period.

Two pilot projects in which the Department has assisted in 1998 and 1999, indicate that coalitions and partnerships can successfully provide mobile library services on a regional basis in Vermont. Such partnerships may actually be the key to offering library services in rural areas and/or with small libraries and hearken back to the origins of "bookwagon" services in Vermont, when the Federation of Women's Clubs actually helped cover the costs of the services.

This project seeks to discover if mobile library service is a viable means of serving rural and suburban populations in the 21st century. If so, does mobile library service entice citizens to use the library and is it an effective marketing tool for attracting attention to all the services Vermont's small libraries offer today?

Through this series of grants, we will also seek to provide answers to what the optimal service area/size is for mobile services in a rural state such as Vermont as well as demonstrate that small public libraries when partnered with other local and regional organizations and institutions can successfully and cost effectively provide and sustain mobile library services. Determining the proper scale for outreach services of this type in rural/suburban areas is essential to cost effective mobile library services in Vermont.

Literacy, the Past and the Future

In his book, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835*, William J. Gilmore notes that "between 1780 and 1835 a series of profound but subtle material and cultural changes altered the way life was lived in a rural society."¹ Gilmore goes on to describe how "for the ordinary men and women who constituted the vast majority of humanity, the traditional five senses were now supplemented by a wholly new act. In its complex interaction of eyes, ears, mouth, and touch, the magical sixth sense of reading afforded a major new way to learn about the world."²

In the new "information age," rural society once again faces such a series of changes and challenges. Dr. Bertram C. Bruce, Professor of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign writes in his paper, "Twenty-First Century Literacy," that "the word 'literacy' never seems to stand still." He notes that "in the workplace, literacy is assuming an ever more central role. This is a new kind of literacy, which entails not only basic reading and writing, but the ability to use reading and writing to solve problems and to communicate complex information."³

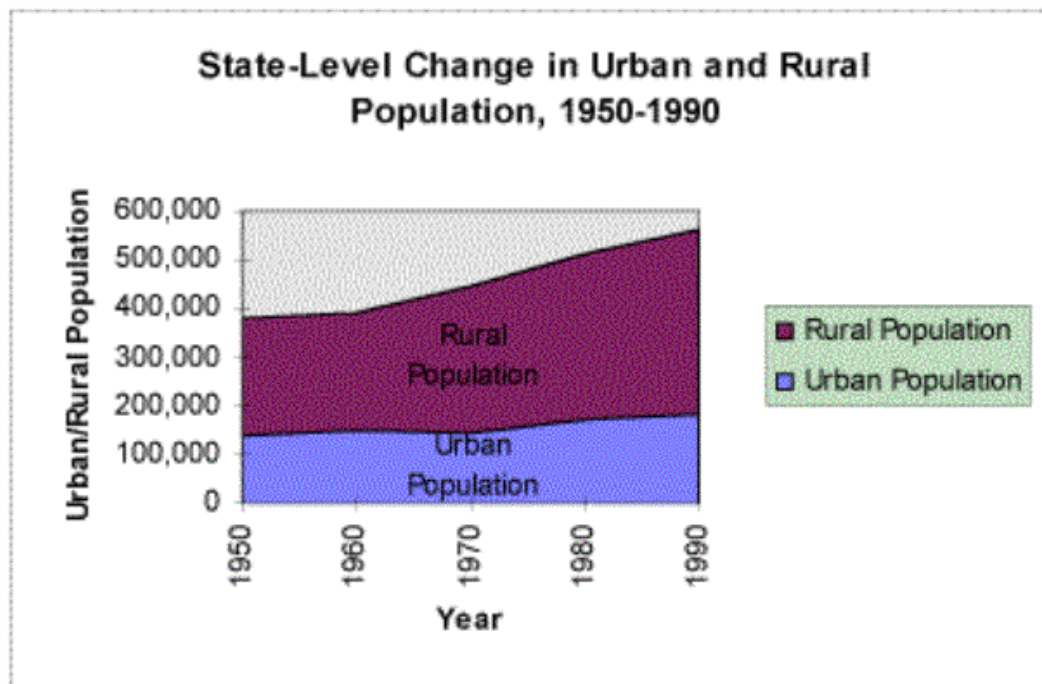
Rural society, its communities and institutions, like schools and libraries, must seek solutions to keep pace with “21st century literacy.” Some of these solutions will be new and untried, and others may be traditional solutions, resurrected and repackaged.

Vermont Profile

Vermont is small and rural; in fact, it is rated the most rural state in the nation (according to the 1990 census, and this is unlikely to change with the 2000 census).⁴ Among the 50 states, Vermont ranks 43rd in geographic area (9,615 square miles) and 49th in population with 608,000 people.

As in most of New England, Vermont has no strong regional or county governance; state government and its various agencies and departments work directly with towns, communities and cities.

Vermont can be described as a collection of rural communities, with nine cities, 236 towns and 60 villages. In 1990 nearly 70% of Vermonters lived in rural areas. People have been moving to rural areas at accelerated rates since 1960. Vermont's rural population grew by 59% between 1960 and 1990, while the urban population grew by 21%. As a percentage of total population, the number of Vermonters living in rural areas is actually increasing.⁵ In fact, Vermont's largest city, Burlington, had a population of only 39,127 in 1990 that is projected to drop by 12.3% by 2015.⁶



Capen, David, et.al. A Planning Tool for Conservationists: Spatial Modeling of Past and Future Land Use in Vermont Towns.

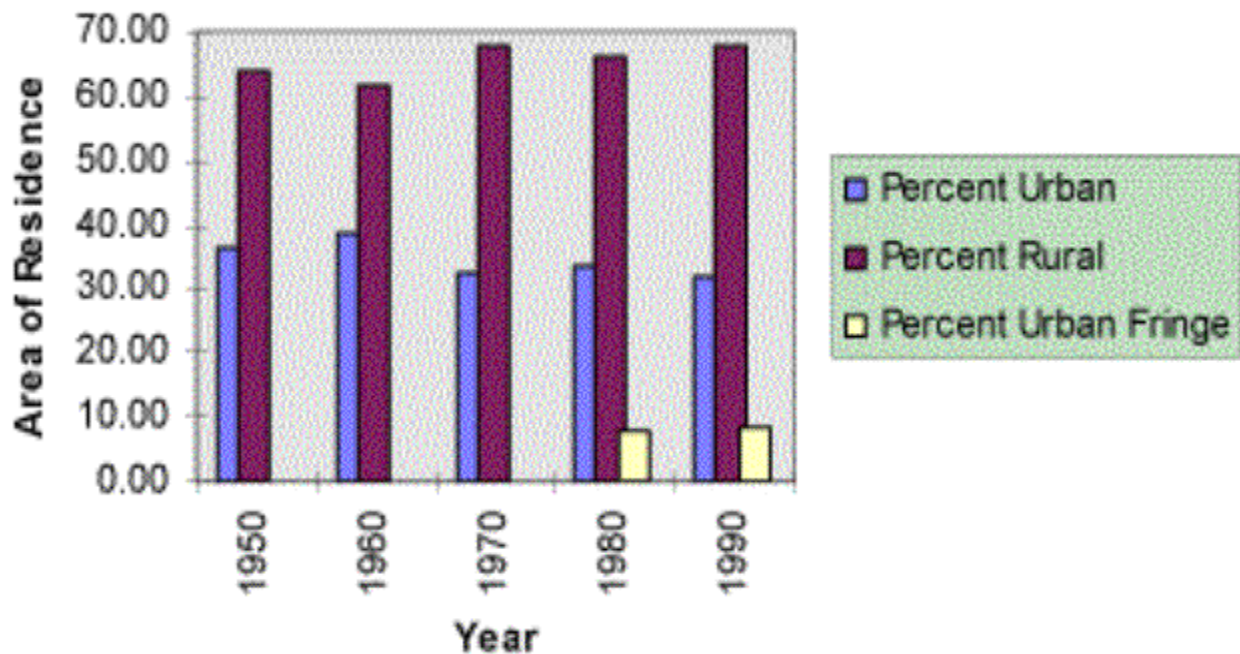
(Burlington, VT: University of Vermont, School of Natural Resources, Spatial Analysis Laboratory)

(Funded by the Orton Family Foundation, Rutland, VT)

<http://snr.uvm.edu/www/pc/sal/lumodel/stateof.html>

(used with permission)

Change in Population Distribution, 1950-1990



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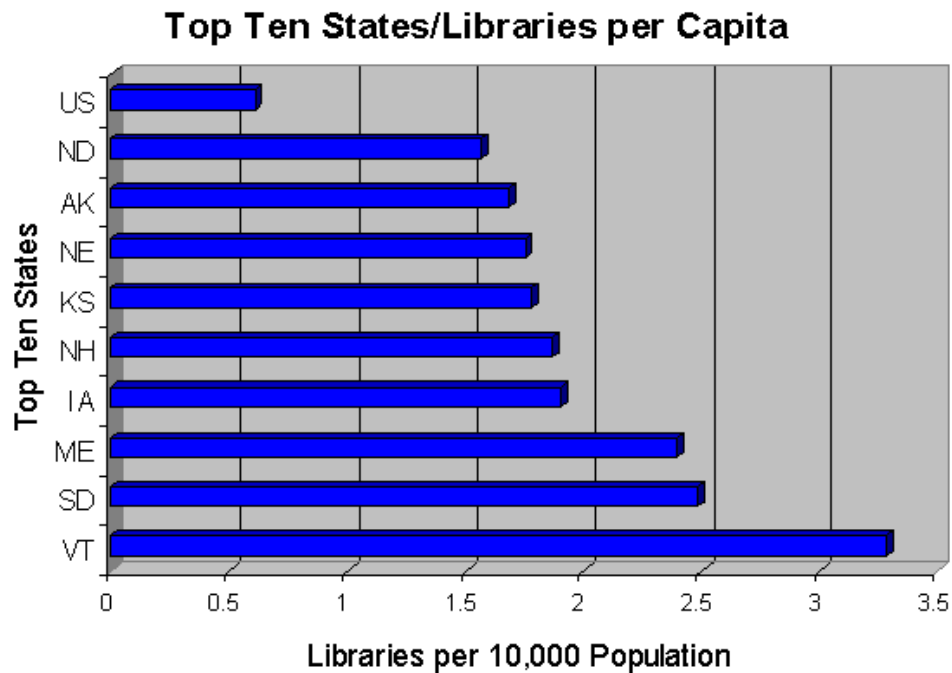
(used with permission)

Due in large part to the arrival of the automobile, historic settlement patterns have been erased in many parts of the state. Where villages once clearly ended and farms or forests began, now low-density single-family subdivisions increasingly reach into the countryside.

The growing rural population means people must drive more for work, shopping, and leisure activities. Vermont has experienced phenomenal growth in vehicle miles traveled. In 1960, for instance, about 390,000 people lived in Vermont, and drivers logged about 1.6 billions miles in the state. By 1995, those numbers had jumped to 580,000 Vermonters and 602 billion miles traveled.⁷ Commuting currently accounts for about one-third of all vehicle miles traveled in Vermont and nationwide. 1990 census travel to work characteristics for Vermont indicate that 72% of workers drove alone by automobile an average of 18 minutes to their jobs. Less than 1% used public transportation.⁸

At the same time, nationally, Vermont, with nearly 200 public libraries, has the greatest number of public libraries per capita, largely located in town or village centers. Though numerous, many Vermont libraries are very small and have small legal service areas. 95% serve communities with

populations under 10,000, 85% serve populations under 5,000 and 25% serve populations under 1,000.⁹

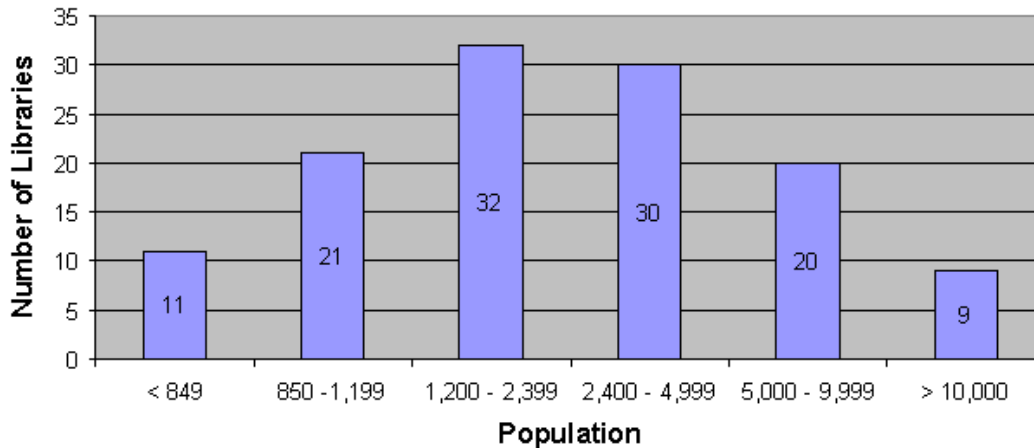


National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)
Public Libraries in the United States: FY 1997
Table 1
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/2000316.pdf>

1/4 of Vermont's public librarians have master's degrees in Library Science and 2/3's of those work in the largest libraries. 75% of Vermont's libraries are run by librarians who had little or no formal library training at the time they started their positions.

124 libraries meet state minimum standards for public libraries, which include having a librarian with or working towards state certification, open at least 14 hours per week, receives some tax support, etc. 18 libraries have no telephone. 135 have computers and internet access.

Number of Vermont Libraries by Population Served 1999



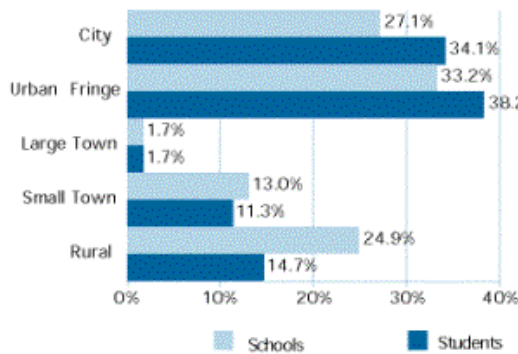
Prepared by Sheila M. Kearns
Information Technology Manager, Vermont Dept. of Libraries
from 1999 VT public library data

A complicating factor has also been the tendency to relocate public buildings, especially schools, from village or town centers to outlying areas. The movement of schools to new locations outside of village or town centers makes it increasingly difficult for students to use local libraries without access to transportation.¹⁰

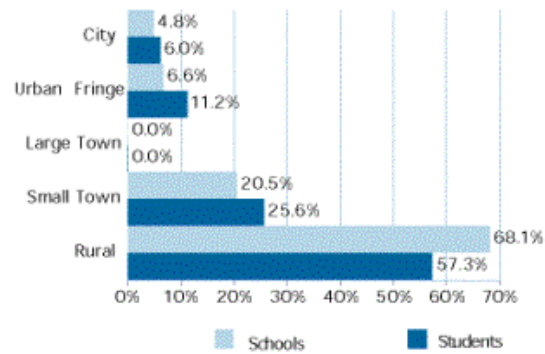
Vermont families are also part of the national trend of working parents. Nationally (in 1998) the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated 64% of families with children under 18 had both parents working, while 72% of female-headed, single parent households with children under 18 are employed.¹¹

Vermont ranks first in the percentage of students attending rural schools (58%), and second in the percentage of schools located in rural places (68.6%).¹² Children who live in or attend schools in rural or outlying areas need transportation to a library just as their parents do to work. With working parents getting to the library becomes even more difficult. The Mobile Library Literacy Project will allow local libraries to reach out to children and their families, seniors, and other potential library users that have difficulty getting to the library.

US



VT



Distribution of public schools and students by type of locale: 1996-97

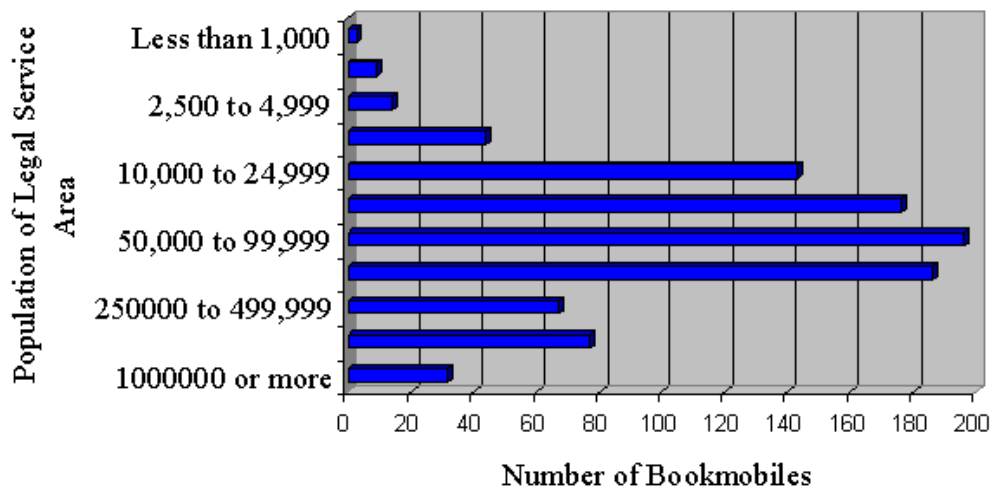
National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)
 State Profiles of Public Elementary and Secondary Education: 1996-97
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/2000304.pdf>

Background on Bookmobiles in Vermont

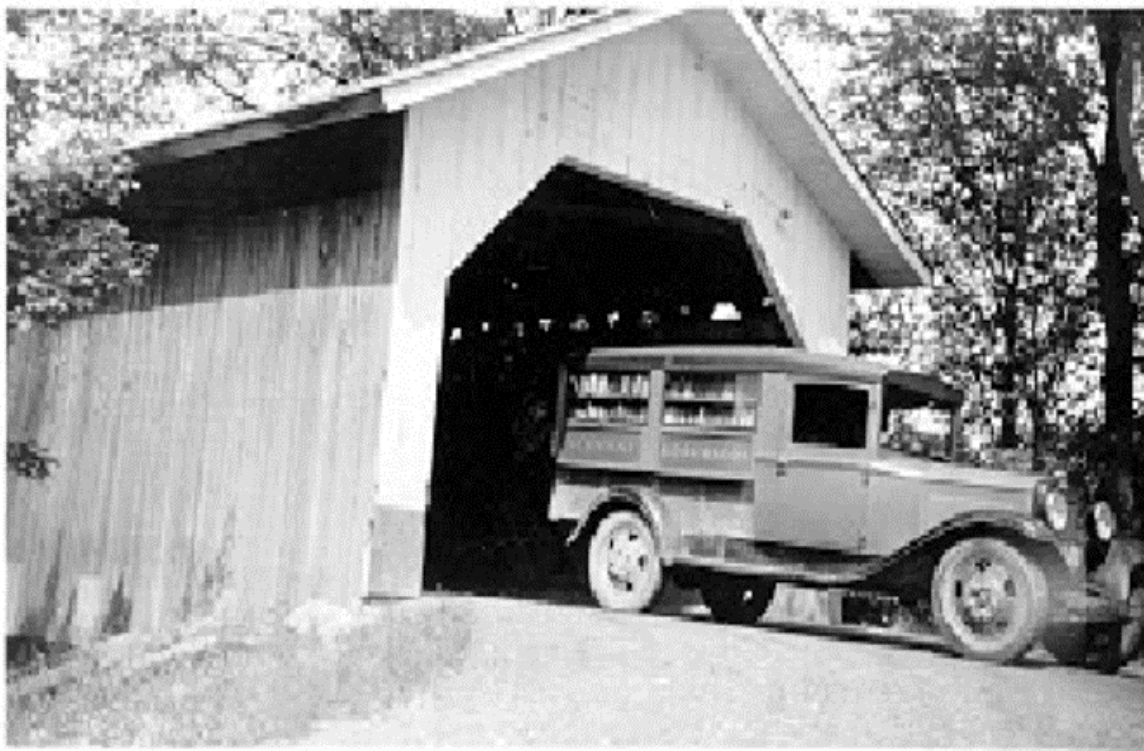
In Fiscal Year 1997 (the last year for which statistics are available), Vermont was the only state in the nation where no public library maintained a bookmobile. Nationally about 10% of public libraries maintain mobile libraries. Interestingly, only 8% of the nation's 966 bookmobiles operate in communities with population under 10,000. More than 60% of bookmobiles nationally operate in communities of 50,000 or more, while Vermont's largest city is under 40,000.¹³

The Free Public Library Service of Vermont (the precursor to the state Department of Libraries) began operating Vermont's first "book-wagon" in 1922. The vehicle was funded by a donation from the state Federation of Women's Clubs. This "book-wagon" delivered materials to small libraries and loaned directly to individuals in towns without libraries.

Bookmobiles in Service (1997)



National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)
Public Libraries in the United States: FY 1997
Table 2A
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/2000316.pdf>



(Vermont Dept. of Libraries)

By 1940, the state library agency had developed regional library services and divided the state into 4 areas, each served by a bookwagon provided by the Federation of Women's Clubs. The bookwagons continued to serve local libraries, schools and individuals.

In 1946, in addition to a new bookwagon funded by the Federation of Women's Clubs, the combined Home Demonstration Clubs of the state also funded a bookwagon after a request by the state library agency for state funding was turned down by the General Assembly.

In 1957 as a result of funding received through the new federal Library Services Act, the state library agency purchased two "walk-in" type bookwagons.

The last "new" bookmobile in Vermont was purchased in 1966. By 1970, as a result of an aging fleet and a change in direction in services of the state library agency, the number of vehicles was reduced from ten to seven, and eventually to five. The State Board of Libraries voted to discontinue state library-operated bookmobile service in Vermont in 1974. At that time the newest bookmobile was 8 years old.



(Vermont Dept. of Libraries)



(Vermont Dept. of Libraries)

The key difference in the proposed mobile library services project is that it will not be the state library agency and its employees staffing bookmobile operations. It will be a local effort and scaled to fit the particular needs of a county, school district or other service area.

Mobile Library Literacy Pilot Projects

Over the course of 1998 and 1999, the Department of Libraries has participated in two local mobile library services projects, providing staff, collections, garaging for vehicles, and assistance in project development and evaluation. One project, over two years in Windham county, run by a local non-profit organization, grew from a borrowed vehicle the first year to purchase an actual "bookmobile" for the second year. The other pilot in a rural school district in Caledonia County was initiated by the largest library in the area and focused primarily on services to children. The Windham County Reads bookmobile and the Cobleigh Public Library "Books on Wheels" reached 5% of the population in their service areas, many of which would not have had contact with library services any other way. Detailed information about these two pilots was reported in the Department of Libraries LSTA FY1998 and FY1999 Annual Reports to the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Both of these projects are continuing and the DOL will continue to provide assistance and resources.

I. Windham County Reads (WCR) Pilot

A. Windham County Overview

Windham County is located in southeastern Vermont, bordering Massachusetts and New Hampshire and includes twenty-three towns ranging in population (1995 estimated) from Brattleboro with 12059 to Somerset with 2. The total county population is 43598 covering 788 square miles and four school supervisory unions. Windham County is Vermont's 3rd largest county in land area.

In 1999, on average a smaller percentage of second grade students in the four supervisory unions met the standard for Developmental Reading Assessment--69% as opposed to 73% statewide. In 1997, in 3 out of 4 of the supervisory unions, a smaller percentage of high school seniors than the statewide average of 64% continued their education within 6 months.

The county median family income in 1989 was \$32,593 compared to \$34,780 for the whole state and 12.2% of children lived in poverty vs. 11.5% statewide.¹⁴

There are 17 public libraries in Windham County, ranging from the Brooks Memorial Library in Brattleboro, one of the finest in the state, open 62 hours per week to the Windham Town Library open 2 hours per week in the summer only. Overall, Windham County ranked among the top two counties statewide in several areas of library service--per capita local tax support, total spent on library collections, number of computer workstations available to the public.¹⁵

B. Year One

In Summer 1998, Windham County Reads (WCR), a primarily volunteer organization that supports family literacy, proposed using a bookmobile to take books to people throughout Windham county. The Vermont Department of Libraries (DOL) substantially supported this plan to improve the local situation and model excellent delivery of service to all Vermonters. The purpose of the bookmobile was to bring books to people of all ages, particularly those who do not use their public library, and to encourage public library use. At the time, most Windham county libraries had not made outreach to this group a priority.

The situation in Windham County was particularly fertile; 10 years of active service from Windham County Reads provided a network of volunteers, community information, and fundraising know-how. Lessons learned in this pilot program provided valuable information to use in other parts of the state.

Cooperative efforts between the Department of Libraries' Southeast Regional Library (SERL), Windham County Reads, and local organizations and volunteers launched this program in July and August 1998, providing useful data for the next year's plans.

DOL staff with significant library experience drove and managed the bookmobile stops two days of the week from July 15 through August 20, 6 weeks in all. The local library provided staff when possible; WCR provided a volunteer at each stop that staff could not attend. The staff or volunteer held a short story time (for the family sites) and help with advising bookmobile users on reading materials. Ruth Allard, director of WCR, provided 4 days of bookmobile backup staffing when DOL staff was needed at the regional library.

The driver/ librarian was be responsible for checking books in and out, teaching users how a library works and what it means to borrow a book, providing information about local public libraries, and other related duties.

Staff promoted the DOL summer reading program "Books Ahoy!" with reading records and bookmarks. Staff noted what materials circulated and what people were looking for.

The Windham Southeast Supervisor Union (WSESU) provided a 20 passenger van from the Career Center. WCR designed and ordered metallic signs to cover the van sides and identify it as the Bookmobile. A local Rotary group agreed to retrofit the van with shelving, contributing materials (plywood) and labor. DOL provided parking for the bookmobile inside the SERL garage.

DOL provided the materials to be used on the van, including large print titles from Special Services. In this experimental phase, DOL wrote off lost or missing books. 75 % of the collection was fiction--picture books, easy readers, board books and adult materials. About 25 % of the collection was popular nonfiction-- auto mechanics, craft books, parenting, biographies, sports, gardening, etc. About one tenth of the whole collection was adult materials in large print, reflecting the same fiction/ nonfiction division. Staff tried to determine what kinds of materials borrowers wanted and adjusted the collection to meet those demands.

The Bookmobile offered limited interlibrary loan. Books owned by the Department of Libraries or the Brooks Memorial Library were supplied the week following the request at the bookmobile stop. If these libraries could not supply the titles, interlibrary loan was not offered except through the local public library. Bookmobile staff checked on availability by using the cellular phone on board.

The bookmobile promoted public libraries in the area, providing a handout with hours, directions and registration requirements. The public library promoted the bookmobile as

part of its public relations. When possible, the public library sent staff to read stories, help find books and work with the people who use the bookmobile.

The route was planned to be within the WSESU district to include sites where groups of people congregate. Suggested sites included general stores, low income/summer lunch programs, senior citizen meetings, recreation programs, daycare centers, trailer parks, and senior housing. WCR contacted the sites and arranged for local information to be posted. Given the two-day schedule, only 11 stops were possible. The pilot program served four towns, Guilford, Vernon, Dummerston and Brattleboro. WSESU serves these 4 towns and had requested that no significant mileage be added to the Career Center van.

The recommended standard to reach a sustainable population (Ohio bookmobile consultant John L. Philip) is 100 people within walking distance of the stop; 8 people who board the bookmobile at a stop; 50 circulations per hour. Recommended frequency: once/week at a regularly scheduled time (once every two weeks if necessary). The permission slips/patron registration forms included a question about previous library use and current age of the children registering.

C. Summary of Results - Year One

High circulation was recorded at a senior housing condominium stop, two neighborhood lunch programs, and a 200-home trailer park. People wanted fiction - picture books, mysteries, westerns, and World War II novels. Bookmobile customers also requested specific books or subjects which libraries provided the following week at the same bookmobile stop.

What lessons did the pilot teach? Regularity and advance publicity are critical to success. Customers at each stop preferred a particular time, not always predictable. Equipping a bookmobile (a borrowed school bus this year) took time, organization, and money - about \$350 and 50 hours of volunteer labor to build the shelves. A computer, cellular phone, and better-designed workstation would have improved service considerably. The storyteller/volunteer had plenty to do: finding the right book for a young adult who likes Gary Paulsen, developing a plan to persuade a parent that her children could keep track of their library books, sharing the love of reading with small groups. Volunteers who lived at the bookmobile stops were the most helpful and least threatening.

Comparison with patron databases at the Brooks Memorial Library indicated that about 75% of the mobile service users were not registered at the public library.

D. Year Two

Immediately after the ending of the Year One pilot, in the fall of 1998, Department of Libraries' SERL library staff met with WCR to help design a true bookmobile and plan staffing and routes. DOL staff served as part of an advisory committee which included representatives from Early Education Services, Vermont Adult Learning, seniors and both a large library and a small one in the county.

With fundraising, WCR was able to purchase an actual bookmobile for service in summer 1999. The breakdown of funding sources were: 40% from foundations, 27% from private individuals, 20% from corporations and 13% from state and federal grants, including an Early Reading Challenge Grant from the State of Vermont Dept. of Education.

Again in Year Two, DOL did not contribute actual dollars, but offered in kind support and facilities. The Bookmobile circulated 3000 books and tapes from regional library book collections. Regional library staff helped choose the collections, plan a circulation and registration system, drive, interview staff, and manage liaison with the public libraries in the county.

The Bookmobile, which is taller than most vans, has been housed at the Regional Library, and WCR staff has used the meeting room and garage. WCR provided funding to send the regional librarian to the national conference for bookmobiles and outreach held in Columbus, OH, in September.

Building on previous experience, during FY99 WCR designed a two-week route to serve daycares, recreation programs, summer lunch programs, grocery stores, senior housing units, village centers, and trailer parks. The Bookmobile traveled through the entire county, serving three towns without any library service and several with minimal service.

The Windham County Reads bookmobile was on the road from June through October, reaching 22 towns, 605 children and 436 adults at 48 regular stops. Over 1000 children and adults registered to use the Bookmobile, and an average of 425 people of all ages visited the Bookmobile each two-week period. The Bookmobile circulated a total of 4,016 books and magazines.

E. Summary of Results - Year Two

The program achieved its qualitative goals; children and adults throughout the county gained increased access to books, and families with fragile literacy skills, senior citizens who can not travel to the public library, and reading families in towns with limited library services were all enthusiastic patrons. People of all ages received

encouragement to read and had access to information about area resources that support family and individual well being.

The WCR Bookmobile circulation during its three and a half months of operation compares favorably with the annual circulation of many small libraries in Vermont. The \$5.91 cost per circulation is similar to that of libraries with comparable circulation and expenditures, as shown below.

Bookmobile cost per circulation: \$5.91 (1/20th of vehicle cost of \$75,000 plus approximate 1999 operating budget of \$20,000 divided by circulations)

Bookmobile	circ. 4,016	exp. \$23,750	cost per circ. \$5.91
Grafton Public	circ. 4,556	exp. \$31,800	cost per circ. \$6.98
Westford Free	circ. 5,025	exp. \$20,618	cost per circ. \$4.10

II. Cobleigh Public Library "Books on Wheels" Pilot

A. Caledonia North Supervisory Union (CSNU) Overview

The Caledonia North Supervisory Union (CSNU) is located in northeastern Vermont and includes the following towns (estimated 1995 population): Burke (1438), Lyndon (5635), Newark (425), Sheffield (601), Sutton (973), Wheelock (543), and East Haven (274) covering 258 square miles.

The Town of Lyndon, the largest community in the school district, itself has distinct areas, including the village of Lyndonville, the actual town center, which serves as a shopping hub for the area and where the Cobleigh Library is located, and Lyndon Center, another smaller center, where the secondary school and Lyndon State College, part of the Vermont state college system, are located. Students, faculty and staff at the college are estimated at 1300.

East Haven, Sheffield and Wheelock have no public library. Burke has two public libraries--East Burke and West Burke, Sutton and Newark each have a library, but none of these 4 libraries report statistical information to the state library agency. Only West Burke uses any of the state library agency services. The Cobleigh Public Library in Lyndonville is really the only active library in the school district and meets Vermont's "Minimum Standards for Public Libraries." The Cobleigh library ranks 10th statewide in number of registered borrowers and provides a wide range of services and programming. Caledonia County itself ranked last among Vermont's 14 counties in average per capita local tax support for libraries with \$3.39.¹⁶

In the school district in 1989, the median family income was \$28,125 compared to \$34,780 for Vermont. In 1989 17.4% of the children lived in poverty as compared to 11.5% statewide. In 1998, 9.2 % of children (ages 5-17) lived in families receiving ANFC compared to 7.9% for Vermont as a whole. In 1998, 20.8% of children lived in families receiving food stamps as compared to 14.6% statewide. In 1989, 13% of the population aged 65 and over lived in poverty as compared to 12.4% statewide.

In 1999, CSNU had a smaller percentage of its 4th and 8th grade students meeting the English/Language Arts standard than the statewide average. A smaller percentage of 4th graders met the standard for Math than the state average. In 1997, 54% of graduating high school seniors in the CSNU continued their education within six months as opposed to 64% statewide.¹⁷

B. Year One

Planning for the "Books on Wheels" project to deliver books and read with children in the seven towns of Caledonia North Supervisory Union (CNSU) began in February 1999. Personnel from CNSU, Cobleigh Public Library, the Department of Libraries' (DOL) Northeast Regional Library and AmeriCorps/VISTA met to do some preliminary planning for a summer start date. Initial funding for the "Books on Wheels" project came from an Early Reading Challenge Grant, which was applied for by the Cobleigh Library and CNSU with an awarded amount of \$7,000.00. The biggest concern for the group at this time was to look for an appropriate vehicle.

In March, a second meeting of 25 representatives from each of the communities (parents, teachers, residents, librarians, CNSU, retired and present business owners, and local newspaper) planned the project. Decisions were made about purchasing vs. leasing a vehicle, refurbishing and stocking, publicizing and recruiting volunteers. The group decided to have a poster contest at the local schools in May to create awareness among the children and in the communities where the bookmobile would travel.

A van was purchased and volunteers built shelves, painted the interior, and installed a carpet donated to the project from a local business. An awning was purchased for the van and a local body shop de-rusted and primed the 1986 plumbing van. A kick-off was held in the Lyndonville Park. The day was filled with a variety of events, which included the van being painted by local children, a program by Bread and Puppets Circus (a local puppeteer and entertainment group), and volunteers reading to children.

Once the bookmobile got rolling it visited 17 sites (school programs, childcare centers, parks, housing developments and trailer parks). Reading partners (ranging in age from 14-80 years) were either on board or met at the sites to read stories while the driver and helper checked out books and signed up summer reading program participants.

On August 20th at the Reading Fun Fair in Lyndonville, DOL's Summer Reading Program reading certificates were awarded to children and volunteer readers were honored with pins.

DOL Northeast Regional Library (NERL) professional staff devoted about 60 hours of time to the project and 1000 titles were borrowed from the regional library collection. The vehicle was garaged at NERL.

C. Summary of Results - Year One

The bookmobile, which ran from the middle of June until September 14, provided service in the following manner:

- 138 new families are now registered at the Cobleigh Library
- a high percentage of these families live in two of the smallest towns
- a total of 1,675 books were circulated during the project
- 16 sites were served, including 5 childcare programs, 6 summer school programs
- the project attracted 7 volunteer readers
- unsolicited phone calls of gratitude and appreciation to sponsoring agencies from parents and school personnel
- a high attendance at the Reading Fun Fair at the project's end
- a lot of interest in finding ways to sustain the project on the part of community members and schools
- because of the unique vehicle the children painted, this project has maintained a high profile and generated a lot of interest
- a local newspaper donated a great deal of space to the "Books on Wheels" events and did a lot to spread the word about the importance of reading
- increased collaboration between and among many agencies and programs

The vitality and popularity of the Cobleigh Public Library was a big plus in the success of this project, but another important factor in its success has to be the general lack of public library service in the towns the bookmobile served. Successful stops for the bookmobile were at locations where summer classes or programs were being held, daycare centers and a recreational park to which many of the children in the area traveled for swimming lessons.

With the addition of an AmeriCorps/VISTA member working 24 hours/per week as the Cobleigh's full time bookmobile driver, the service is continuing.

Conclusion

We hope that mobile library literacy project can increase the effectiveness of the rural public library with the right combination of stakeholders, territory, and support. In the new rural Vermont where traditional development patterns like town and village centers with walkable environments, community gathering places, and public services and facilities such as schools and libraries are being challenged, the local public library by its very location (in that town center) may be inaccessible to many.

This project hopes to provide both the necessary information and methodology for providing and evaluating mobile library services in rural/suburban environments. Though much has been written in the past about the importance of such services in rural areas, the national data does not show that much mobile library service is actually taking place in these areas.

We are looking for successful models that could be readily adapted and used elsewhere to offer mobile library services. Is the most effective method for libraries to team with one or more of the many community social agencies? Are organizations other than libraries able to take a leadership role and successfully deliver such services? What size operation is optimal--how many towns or square miles, how many partners and libraries, what size vehicle, staff or collection?

The Vermont project should provide some detailed information on these issues and others. Good data and a variety of successful models could lead to a fresh look at the use of traditional mobile library services elsewhere in the nation and/or new ways of providing such services as well as non-traditional partnerships that can be formed to offer these services.

About the Author

Sybil Brigham McShane has held the position of Vermont State Librarian since 1997 and has worked in Vermont's state library agency for 20 years, 15 in a management capacity. At the Department she has served as Director of Reference and Law Services and as Information Systems Director. She has overseen most of the department's technology, systems and networking initiatives as well as the local library technology grant program. She has experience in school and public libraries.

Acknowledgements

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¹ Gilmore, William J. Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835. (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1989), p. 17.

² Ibid. p. 23.

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⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census. Statistical Abstract of the United States. "Table 46 - Urban and rural population, 1960 to 1990, and by state, 1990." (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 1999).

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